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LETTERS

Leaks Can Kill

William Giles' article on media leaks (November) inaccurately represents the seriousness of the problem the U.S. intelligence community and the nation face concerning media disclosures of classified information. Damaging leaks of classified sources and methods have seriously affected the intelligence community's ability to protect the nation. Agents have been arrested and have disappeared—they were probably executed; valuable technical collection systems have been compromised and must be replaced at vast expense to the taxpayer; and our relationship with other intelligence services has been damaged by unauthorized disclosures.

Giles does not mention any of this and treats leaks of sensitive data as a game. It is no game; it is a serious problem.

Director Casey explained our concerns last April to the American Society of Newspaper Editors. In doing so, he noted that he is required by law to protect the vital sources and methods by which we collect intelligence. He takes that responsibility seriously, and he asked for the cooperation of the media. When the nation's ability to protect itself is damaged, all Americans suffer—journalists and non-journalists alike. While the government is responsible for protecting properly classified information and for disciplining those who violate their oaths of office by illegally purveying such information to the media, the media also must bear the responsibility for acting as a "fence" for stolen goods and for its involvement in damaging the nation's security.

The media and the intelligence community must reason together on national security matters for the protection of all Americans.

George V. Lauder
Central Intelligence Agency

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